AN AUDIT OF SELECTED

PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

1. Accelerated Christian Education
2. Alpha Omega
3. Mennonite Schools
4. Seventh-day Adventist Schools

and

A BEKA Learning Resources

Alberta Education

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The work on which the report was based was directed by Curriculum Branch staff and was carried out by officials of Alberta Education and others. The contributions of the Director and Associate Directors of Curriculum, regional office consultants, curriculum committee members, and Curriculum Branch secretaries are acknowledged with deep appreciation.

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A REVIEW OF SELECTED PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

I. INTRODUCTION

The past decade in education has been marked by rapid growth of the private school movement. At first this phenomenon accompanied expansion of public school systems, but in recent years the trend has contrasted starkly with enrolment declines in public schools. From a handful of largely denominational private schools in the early years, by June, 1984 the number of approved private schools in Alberta had increased to 140 in all categories.

Procedures for approving private schools have evolved over a number of years as a result of changes in legislation and regulations. Informal approval processes have been replaced by the carefully delineated routines contained in the current Alberta Education Private Schools Handbook (May, 1984). The need for a systematic and uniform approval process has grown out of the increased volume of applications across the province. In addition, two recent events have highlighted the need to re-examine not only the procedures themselves but the actual programs of operating private schools.

The re-introduction in January, 1984 of provincial examinations as a means of establishing fair and credible student achievement standards has drawn attention to the province's responsibility to protect student access to a diploma. In addition, the "Keegstra incident" of 1983 and the subsequent attempt by Alberta Education to foster tolerance and understanding for minorities has sparked renewed interest in public school programs and approved learning resources. These initiatives with

respect to public school programs were major factors in Alberta Education's decision to review the programs of approved private schools.

On June 1, 1984, the Minister of Education, the Honourable David King, directed officials of Alberta Education to conduct a review of programs of study and instructional materials used in a number of approved private schools.[1] Four groups of schools were identified: schools using the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum; schools using the Alpha Omega program; Mennonite Parochial Schools; and Seventh-day Adventist Schools.

This report contains the results of that review. The remainder of the report contains a description of the purposes and limitations of the study, the procedures followed and the findings which emerged from the study. The report continues with the identification of policy issues and concludes with a list of fifteen recommendations for consideration in establishing future policy regarding private school program approvals.

II. PURPOSES

This review has the following purposes:

1. To determine the congruence of four specific private school curricula with Alberta programs/courses;

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[1] Learning resources distributed by A BEKA Book Publications were included in the audit although there is no specific group of private schools to which the use of these materials can be attributed. A BEKA materials are commonly used in Mennonite schools but not exclusively.

2. To evaluate the educational soundness of private school curricula in terms of content and standards.

3. To comment on the curricular documents/resources in relation to their fostering of tolerance and understanding for minority groups.

4. To identify the issues and make recommendations for future consideration in formulating policy covering approval of private school programs.

Under the provisions of the Department of Education Act and its regulations (A.R. 243/70, A.R. 98/74, A.R. 140/78), private schools are required to follow courses of study which are prescribed or approved by the Minister. Section 8 of A.R. 243/70 makes it clear that private school programs are to be treated in much the same manner as those of public schools since the specific reference is to Section 11(2)(a) and 11(2)(b) of the School Act. In other words, private schools are to use the Alberta curriculum or to submit their programs to Alberta Education for approval. The private schools selected for this review submitted their programs in the past as alternative programs and had them approved.

The basic question which this report addresses is: given the changed circumstances in public education in Alberta referred to earlier, should existing private school programs continue to be approved? What modifications might be required before approval can be given?

III. PROCEDURE

The audit of private school curriculum materials was carried out during the last half of 1984 by members of the Curriculum Branch, Regional Office Consultants, members of provincial curriculum committees

and teachers. Following establishment of the audit procedures, the five Associate Directors of Curriculum prepared reports on the subject areas for which they were responsible. Inservice with auditors was carried out as needed to ensure consistency of performance. In some cases, the audits were carried out as a group procedure but, in other cases, audits were done on an individual basis. Where non-departmental personnel were employed, the work was carried out under the supervision of Alberta Education staff.

Almost 100 individuals participated in the private school program review, with department and non-department personnel each making up roughly one-half of this total. Involvement of auditors from the various groups is summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF AUDITORS
BY PROGRAM

Subject Area	Curriculum Branch Personnel	Regional Offices Personnel	Provincial Committees	Teachers and Supervisors	Total
Language Arts	2	4	11		17
Fine Arts	2	4			6
Mathematics	2	4	6	3	15
Science	2	5	11	5	23
Health	2	2	2		6
Social Studies	2	5	4	9	20
Industrial Education	2				2
Home Economics	2	1		1	4
Business Education	2	2			4
Totals	18[2]	27	34	18	97

[2] Most members of the Curriculum Branch served on more than one subject review team. Hence this sum exceeds the total number of Associates and Learning Resource Officers in the Branch.

Each audit group was asked to examine materials from the four private school programs selected for review. A concerted effort was made to assemble all the curriculum documents, learning resources and instructional materials believed to constitute these programs. However, due to constraints of time, unavailability of some resources, and lack of cooperation by one distributor,[3] not all documents were available for review.

Once the evaluation was completed for a given private school program, a summary statement containing the findings for that program was prepared. These program summaries were subsequently incorporated into a single comprehensive report covering all four programs.

Instructional Materials

Copies of private school materials were obtained primarily by contacting authorized distributors and by consulting publications catalogues received from these sources. In one case, materials were forwarded to the department by the educational superintendent for the church group in question. In another case, the Covenant Community Training Centre furnished the required materials. In all, nine different sources provided the materials for evaluation. The names of the various suppliers have been listed in Appendix I. The purchased materials

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[3] A BEKA Book Publications declined to supply Alberta Education with copies of its Teacher's Guides and curricula on the grounds that its administrative policy prevented it from doing so.

constitute a reference collection of private school learning resources.

Audited learning resources fell into two categories, traditional textbooks and learning packs or study guides. Learning packs are called PACEs in schools using Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) program materials, and LIFEPACs in Alpha Omega program schools. Since there are approximately 10 study guides for each subject at each grade level, there was a relatively large number of these documents among the total number of audited materials. Of the 2255 resources examined, over 1800 were learning packs.

Language arts, mathematics, science and social studies documents formed the bulk of the audited materials. As is the case with public school learning resources, language arts materials with 1061 items made up the largest single group of private school resources reviewed. Table 2 provides a complete summary, by subject and private school program, of the materials which were evaluated by the department.

With relatively few exceptions, private school instructional materials which were examined have been published in the United States. This is true even when there is a Canadian distributor for the materials, e.g., for A.C.E. and Alpha Omega program schools. An important exception to this general rule is the set of Canadianized social studies materials produced by Covenant Community Training Centre. Seventh-day Adventist schools use a mixture of American materials and currently approved Alberta resources, while Mennonite Parochial schools utilize materials from a variety of American sources plus materials formerly approved for use in Alberta schools.

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF AUDITED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
BY SUBJECT AREA

Subject Area	Private School Program/Resources					
	Accelerated Christian Education	Alpha Omega	Seventh-day Adventist	Mennonite Parochial	A BEKA	Totals
Language Arts	689	136	110	51	75	1061
Fine Arts	34(Art)	11(Art)		4(Music)	9(Music)	58
Mathematics	130	109	15	9	12	275
Science	207	106	18	8	12	351
Health	22	15	25			62
Social Studies[4] (49)	152	120		15	7	343
Industrial Education	6					6
Home Economics		13				13
Business Education	54			1		55
Bible		31				31
Totals (49)	1343	541	168	88	115	2255

Evaluation Criteria

In making judgements about the programs, auditors were asked to apply the same basic criteria used in developing and approving Alberta programs/courses. For the purposes of this study, these have been stated as follows:

1. Fit With Alberta Program of Studies

   1.1 Philosophy
   1.2 Content (scope, sequence, organization), Canadian & metric requirements
   1.3 Methodology - in the context of the discipline

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[4] One hundred fifty two social studies documents were of American origin. An additional 49 documents prepared by the Covenant Community Training Centre of Edmonton are used in a variety of private schools.

2. Educational Soundness of Content and Organization

Although educational soundness may be described in a number of ways, for this audit it has been defined as:

2.1 Technical accuracy (up-to-date)
2.2 Appropriateness to maturity level of students
2.3 Incorporation of principles of pedagogy; efficiency of methodology
2.4 Preparation for high school diploma; achievement standards, the time-credit relationship

3. Tolerance and Understanding for Minority Groups

3.1 Application to the physically impaired, to the aged, to members of other racial, ethnic and religious groups, to both sexes
3.2 The six criteria which constitute the department's standard for tolerance and understanding (Appendix II).

Criterion 1.2, Content, was further sub-divided into goals and objectives, concepts, skills and attitudes (values). It should be noted that the standards used for judging content were subject outlines in the Alberta Programs of Studies and curriculum guides.

Usually the audit process for a given resource was conducted by one person but in language arts and fine arts a separate review was carried out for tolerance and understanding.

Limitations

At the outset, it should be made clear that the review conducted was a review of materials only. No classroom visits were made to private schools nor were interviews conducted with their personnel. The only direct contact between Alberta Education and private school personnel was to expedite the collection of curricular materials. What is presented in this report is an audit of selected private school program instructional

materials and not a description of instructional practices in the schools where these documents are employed. These could differ substantially.

A second limitation was the unavailability of certain crucial documents such as programs of studies and curriculum guides. Lacking direct access to statements of philosophy and curriculum guides, reviewers were forced to infer these critical program elements from the learning resources themselves.

A further constraint on the thoroughness of the study was the incompleteness of the instructional materials themselves. In some cases not all resources for a subject were available to the reviewers while in other cases the latest edition of a particular resource was not supplied by the distribution agency. Some private schools are undoubtedly using materials in addition to those examined during this review.

Also, curricular materials were not submitted for most private school programs for a number of required subjects, e.g., elementary art, music and physical education. This was also true for most junior high school Group 'A' options and senior high school electives. Obviously, no responses to the review questions are possible under these circumstances for such courses. It does not follow, however, that these courses are not being offered in private schools.

The majority of the participants in this study were individuals who had received their training and experience in the public school system. As a consequence, some judgments may reflect the perspectives of the Alberta Program of Studies rather than the philosophies of the private schools whose learning resources were being examined.

Finally, no data from the Woods Gordon <u>Study of Private Schools in</u>

Alberta have been incorporated in this report because the audit was intended as a separate activity.

IV. AN OVERVIEW OF FOUR PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAMS

In April, 1984 a survey of private school programs was conducted by the Regional office staff of Alberta Education. The distribution of programs revealed by that survey is shown on Table 3.

TABLE 3

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR CATEGORY 1 AND CATEGORY 4 PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Program Being Followed	Catetory 1	Category 4	Total
Accelerated Christian Education	17	2	19
Alpha Omega	8	2	10
Mennonite Parochial School	1	12	13
Seventh-day Adventist	14	0	14
Alberta Curriculum[5]	32	2	34
Total	72	18	90

About 40 percent of Category 1 and Category 4 schools adhere to the Alberta Program of Studies. See Appendix III for definitions of the private school categories. The A.C.E. program is followed in one-fifth of the private schools, with the other three programs almost evenly divided among the remaining schools.

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[5] An additional four private schools said they were using the Alberta curriculum but did not identify the category of private schools in which they were operating.

Philosophy

The four private school programs which were reviewed share at least one deep and abiding commitment, that is, to the education of children within a Christian context. This purpose is articulated in various documents by the following statements:

> To teach and to exemplify the ideals and principles of true Christianity in such a manner as to inspire our students to develop character patterned after God's standards.[6]
>
> To guide the student to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. To guide the development of knowledge, habits and attitudes associated with Christian living.[7]
>
> The school shall endeavour to achieve a Christian perspective and a high standard of instruction in all its course offerings. It will be an educational community with Jesus Christ as the head.[8]

Programming and Learning Resources

Despite this commonality of purpose, the four school programs vary significantly in terms of content, methodology and grade coverage. For example, none of the Mennonite Parochial schools offers instruction beyond grade 9, at the present time, while the other three private schools do. Private schools also differ in their approaches to instruction. Seventh-day Adventist and Mennonite schools follow a more traditional pattern of group instruction while A.C.E. and Alpha Omega schools use programmed learning materials in their attempt to individualize instruction.

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6 Bulletin, '83-'84, College Heights Adventist Junior Academy, College Heights, Alberta.

7 Alpha Omega LIFEPAC Scope and Sequence

8 Prospectus, Menno Simons School, Calgary, Alberta, 1983-84, p.1.

Based on an examination of program documents and learning resources, the four private school groups do not offer as broad a range of courses as do public and separate schools. In fact, as Table 4 demonstrates, very little choice of optional or elective courses may be available to students in these private schools.

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF AUDITED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS
BY SUBJECT AND GRADE LEVEL

Subject	Grade(s) For Which Materials Were Reviewed			
	Accelerated Christian Education	Alpha Omega	Seventh-day Adventist	Mennonite Parochial
Language Arts	1-12	1-12	1-8	1-9
Mathematics	1-12	1-12		1-9
Science	1-9	1-12	1-8	1-9
Biology	10-12	10-12		
Chemistry	10-12	10-12		
Physics	10-12	10-12		
Social Studies	1-12	1-12		3-8
Health	1-6	1-9	1-8	1-8
Physical Education	no curriculum materials available for review			
Fine Arts				
Art	7,9,10	10		
Music				1-6
Practical Arts				
Business Education	(Shorthand, Typing, General Business, Bus. Calc., Accounting) Grade 10	Consumer Math 10-12		Accounting
Home Economics		10		
Industrial Education	Automotives 12			
Bible		1-12		

While it may appear from Table 4 that Alpha Omega and A.C.E. programs are more comprehensive than the other two, the data as presented are somewhat misleading. Seventh-day Adventist schools have chosen to follow Alberta curriculum outlines in mathematics and social studies in grades 1-8, and to offer the full Alberta program in all subjects in grades 9-12. Similarly, teachers of grade 1-8 science in Seventh-day Adventist schools follow the provincial science program but use a combination of authorized learning resources plus their own materials. Furthermore, as noted previously, instruction is not offered beyond grade 9 in Mennonite schools.

Origin of Instructional Materials

All four private school programs depend upon materials published in the United States for their religious orientation. A.C.E. and Alpha Omega schools are able to combine this feature with the element of programmed learning when they purchase commercially- prepared PACEs and LIFEPACs from American suppliers.

While the use of these American learning resources has the obvious advantages listed above, these materials also possess several other features which are of more dubious value from a Canadian perspective. Instructional materials written and produced in the United States for American schools naturally reflect the American scene, politically, economically, and culturally. This lack of Canadian focus is a problem, one example of which is the absence of Canadian literature.

Texts written for the American market are organized around an 8-4 rather than a 6-3-3 grade arrangement. Decisions about curriculum content, sequence and difficulty sometimes hinge on whether grade 9 is located in the junior or in the senior high school.

Another potential problem created for Alberta private school students using American instructional programs occurs in the high school science program. Typically, students using these programs take biology in grade 10, chemistry in grade 11 and physics in grade 12. This approach contrasts with the Alberta science program which is structured so that students can take a three-year sequence in a given science.

Instructional materials of American origin possess one further feature which distinguishes them from those written for Canadian schools. Invariably, health is incorporated in the science course and thus is not taught separately. Health and science are integrated in A.C.E., Alpha Omega and A BEKA instructional materials. Whether the subjects are separately timetabled in these private schools is not known.

V. REPORTING THE RESULTS

Three methods of reporting the results of the private school program review were considered; by individual subjects across the four programs, by provincial criteria across the four programs, and by the same criteria separately for each program. The last-mentioned approach has been used because it possesses greater brevity and there is less risk of unfair comparisons being made among the various private school programs.

The decision to report each program separately, and to summarize, inevitably leads to a loss of detailed information. The complete report for each program should be made available under appropriate circumstances to authorized representatives of the private schools involved.

What follows is a report by exception. No attempt has been made to comment on every subject at each grade level, or to address all aspects of a given private school program. If a program element is not cited in this summary it should be assumed that the criteria for that element have either been adequately met or that the variance was insufficient to warrant specific mention.

Reviews of instructional materials were conducted in this order:

Accelerated Christian Education materials,[9]
Alpha Omega materials,
Seventh-day Adventist materials,
Mennonite Parochial School materials, and
A BEKA materials.

As the project progressed, both the review procedure and the reporting style were modified slightly. This will become apparent to the reader.

Earlier in this document, the three criteria employed in the audit were described. These are:

1. Fit With Alberta Program
2. Educational Soundness
3. Tolerance and Understanding

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[9] Covenant Community Centre learning resources were reviewed with those used in A.C.E. schools, but the former materials are used in other schools as well.

In the next five sections of this report, the findings for each set of instructional materials will be described using the above format.

The reader is reminded of the limitation that the analysis and commentary for each private school program is based entirely on a review of instructional materials. Except insofar as methodology is explicitly incorporated in provincial curricula, the statements which follow do not apply either to the operations of private schools or to classroom instructional practice. These matters are outside the scope of this review.

VI. ACCELERATED CHRISTIAN EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Program Description

The Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) Program consists of packets of instructional materials called PACEs. The content of each subject such as mathematics, language arts, science and social studies is divided into approximately twelve discrete units of study at each grade level. PACEs are self-directed instructional devices because students work their way through them at their own rate. Students are required to demonstrate "mastery" of the content of each PACE by achieving a score of 80 percent or more on the accompanying test. Since students progress at their own speed, they spend differing amounts of time on each PACE and subsequently in each grade. Traditional timetabling procedures in which a block of time is assigned for all students in each subject would not be necessary in A.C.E. schools.

When A.C.E. curriculum materials were first approved, a number of modifications were required.

1. S.I. Metric. Where appropriate, mathematics and science PACEs were to be revised to incorporate S.I. metric units and conventions.
2. Canadian Content. Social studies PACEs were to be amended to provide a Canadian orientation and to include suitable Canadian content.
   With the 1981 revision of the province's high school language arts program, a similar expectation for the introduction of Canadian content automatically followed.
3. Sequence. Mathematics PACEs at the high school level were to be reordered to correspond to the sequence of content in the Alberta high school mathematics program.
4. The Genre. A.C.E. high school language arts courses were to be supplemented by additional selections of short stories, novels and dramas.

In the intervening years since the A.C.E. program was initially approved, the results of this review would seem to indicate that those responsible for selecting resources for use in A.C.E. schools have made limited progress in making the required revisions. As far as learning resources are concerned, the problems largely remain.

Audit Results

1. Fit With Alberta Programs

Content Match. The curriculum content of A.C.E. subject materials matches in varying degrees the content of equivalent Alberta courses. While an accurate assessment of content fit is virtually impossible for every subject, the percentage of congruency between the two sets of curricula varied from a high of approximately 70% for Mathematics 20 to a low of about 10% for Beginning Art, a junior high art course.

Rarely do A.C.E. course materials adequately address more than half of the goals and objectives of the corresponding Alberta course. Mathematics 10 and 20, and junior high science are exceptions. One example would be the Canadianized version of A.C.E. social studies developed by Covenant Community Training Centre for grades 5, 7, 8, 10 and 12.

In language arts the reviewers found the A.C.E. curriculum materials covered only reading and writing, omitting three of the five main skill areas, i.e., viewing, listening and speaking. The emphasis on writing skills was judged to be quite inadequate. Combined with the coverage rating from the other A.C.E. courses, the best estimate of content coverage by A.C.E. curriculum materials (all subjects, all grades), as compared to Alberta courses, is not more than fifty percent.

Critical Thinking. The manner in which content coverage has been effected is also important. One approach to content analysis is to divide cognitive skills into two levels, namely, higher-level cognitive skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application) and lower-level cognitive skills (knowledge, comprehension). From the perspective of PACEs, the content of virtually every A.C.E. course/ program is presented almost entirely at the knowledge or recall level. Exceptions include some materials in senior high school mathematics, the physical sciences, and in the Covenant Community Social Studies. There are far too few examples in the A.C.E. curriculum materials where students are called

upon to exercise their creative powers, to be original and to develop critical thinking skills. The schools concerned should examine carefully the validity of this criticism.

Canadian Content. In course evaluation after course evaluation, the same statements appear, "The content of the course has an American orientation.", "The illustrations, references and spellings are always American." or "There is no Canadian content." This deficiency was noted in the original A.C.E. program review. With the exception of the Covenant Community social studies materials, the problem has not been solved. Based on the not unreasonable premise that Alberta's educational programs should reflect the uniqueness of Canadian culture, the lack of Canadian content represents a serious deficiency in A.C.E. instructional materials. For this reason, these materials should be rated as unacceptable.

S.I. Metric. Some progress has been noted in the conversion from the Imperial system of units to S.I. metric. However, the changeover has not been fully accomplished. Both measurement systems appear in A.C.E. elementary science materials. The danger of confusing children by employing dual systems of measurement with emphasis on conversions has been widely noted by science and mathematics educators, and by ministries of education. This problem becomes particularly critical at the high school level for students who will be writing Advanced Diploma Examinations.

Scope and Sequence. A.C.E. learning materials do not always adhere to Alberta course scope and sequence patterns. It could be argued that these are arbitrary choices in any case and the A.C.E. placement of topics may be just as good as Alberta's. Alberta Education curriculum development takes into account both the experiences of teachers who pilot new programs, and also sound pedagogy and the latest research on student learning, motivation and maturation. Where there are differences, reviewers were of the opinion that the Alberta placement decisions more accurately take into account these factors.

It is recognized that there are situations, such as in social studies, where the nature of certain topics could allow for some latitude in grade assignment. As long as corresponding adjustments are made in levels of student achievement, the sequencing of A.C.E. content need not always coincide with Alberta's.

One major area of concern occurs when course content is assigned to the senior high school. High school courses carry credit for graduation. Alberta high school courses carry with them some presumption of content appropriateness and difficulty, as well as a time-credit relationship (one credit equals 25 hours of instruction). Based on this criticism, the A.C.E. course called Brush Art does not warrant status as a high school credit course. The question of topic placement also arises during the discussion of Educational Soundness.

Methodology. Alberta Education curriculum programs commence with a statement of the philosophy and goals. Expected learning outcomes, concepts, skills and attitudes, are then derived and incorporated into the content outline. Unless the manner in which a student learns particular content is inextricably bound to the course objectives, the method of instruction is left to the teacher's discretion. In certain courses, social studies and science for example, the inquiry process and the skills themselves are important learning outcomes. In these courses the approach to instruction is critical and the methodology has therefore been prescribed.

The principle on which PACEs are built is that of programmed instruction, an individualized approach which enables students to proceed at their own rates. Unquestionably, this strategy possesses the potential to accommodate individual differences in rates of learning. The use of self-pacing certainly does not rule out the possibility of students engaging in social studies and science inquiry activities. In schools making exclusive use of A.C.E. instructional materials, the acquisition of these skills by students would be most unlikely.

PACEs which were reviewed by Alberta Education's evaluators contained a very high percentage of exercises which have been described as being at a simple recall level. Often the test exercise was a restatement of material from the student resource which required only the insertion of a missing word. This is a case where the potential power of a learning method has been seriously curtailed by the manner in which PACE materials are written. A number of reviewers described PACEs as promoting rote learning.

A number of deficiencies have been identified in the A.C.E. curriculum materials. Whether these defects are or can be remedied through classroom instruction could not be determined in this review. However, in the opinion of reviewers, major teacher interventions would be required to overcome the problems noted.

2. Educational Soundness

Among the measures of education soundness used in rating A.C.E. curricula were: technical accuracy, appropriateness of material to the maturity level of children, standards of achievement and the time-credit relationship.

While there are a number of inaccuracies in the use of terms and in their definitions scattered through the PACEs, these errors are the exception rather than the rule. For the most part PACEs are well written, present information clearly and are organized around explicit objectives. The use of examples, practice exercises, systematic reviews and cumulative exercises illustrates the incorporation of commonly accepted, sound principles of pedagogy.

Concepts and vocabulary tend to be introduced before the learner has been adequately prepared by prior experience to deal with them.

The major criticisms of A.C.E. materials in terms of their educational soundness center on the preparation of students for taking Advanced Diploma Examinations and on the credits allocated to certain high school courses.

The A.C.E. decision to organize the high school science program so that students take biology in grade 10, chemistry in grade 11 and physics in grade 12 is a debatable one in view of the need for students to write Advanced Diploma Examinations. While it is true that the concentrated study of a subject has certain advantages, it often limits the quality and scope of learning experiences for students. A further possible problem may occur when grade 10 students attempt to come to grips intellectually with concepts and issues designed for students at a grade 12 level of maturity.

Equally disadvantageous to a student's chances of success on these examinations is the omission of major core components of the Alberta mathematics and science courses by A.C.E. programs. Over 60% of provincial Mathematics 30 core objectives are omitted from A.C.E. mathematics materials, while less than 50% of the core science programs (biology, chemistry and physics) receive adequate coverage in the A.C.E. science PACEs. Obviously, private school students whose classroom instruction is based on the A.C.E. materials would be seriously hampered in writing Alberta Advanced Diploma examinations. Reviewers of the A.C.E. high school language arts materials expressed the same reservation regarding this subject and student preparation to write either of the two English diploma examinations.

The second of the two concerns mentioned earlier has to do with the credit value of certain A.C.E. courses. Two courses were identified by evaluators as being inappropriately placed or overvalued in terms of credits: Brush Art (grade 10) and Automotives (Mechanics 12). The

former was rated as equivalent to a junior high course and the latter was evaluated as being worth only a single credit. At issue here is the lowering of the standard of achievement required for a high school diploma.

3. Tolerance and Understanding

Throughout the PACEs which make up each course are found biblical references and quotations from the Scriptures. The developers and users of A.C.E. materials believe this practice is essential to the educational quality of A.C.E. materials. It is only when the use of the approach to integrate educational content within a religious context impedes learning that an objection can be raised.

One example of possible interference with learning by the religious orientation of A.C.E. materials has been cited by auditors. This case involves the A.C.E. science program. The elementary part was rated problematic while the junior high science and biology programs were rated as unacceptable. The unacceptable ratings were given because of the repeated condemnation of those who reject the author's interpretations of the Bible as these pertain to science. Those who challenge the explanations given in PACEs, and text references in particular, to historical events and scientific phenomena are described as being "godless", "anti-biblical", "foolish", and "a fake teacher".

In the minds of the auditors, the A.C.E. interpretations of some natural phenomena are unscientific. Accepting the fact that one may hold a creationist view, the condemnatory language of those holding opposing views is a notable example of intolerance. A.C.E. materials ought to respect the integrity of those who hold other views and to teach a charitable attitude toward people who approach scientific data in a different manner.

A.C.E. materials, except as noted above, do not display a systematic lack of tolerance and understanding toward any of the minority groups. Occasional lapses do occur as were noted in social studies where a degree of insensitivity towards blacks, Jews, and Natives was identified. These flaws are insufficient to warrant rejection. Some of the foregoing problems also were encountered in the Covenant Community social studies documents.

The promotion of attitudes of tolerance, understanding and respect for others is more than an avoidance of slights towards people who are different. According to the criteria used in the audit of Alberta Education resources, material which fosters critical thinking as a basic objective is a necessary ingredient for developing each attitude. By themselves, A.C.E. materials are notably lacking in this respect.

VII. ALPHA OMEGA INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Program Description

The Alpha Omega program is very similar to the A.C.E. program in that it is organized around self-contained study guides known as LIFEPACs. Not only do the two programs share the same instructional approach, but both make extensive use of learning materials which have a strong religious orientation and which are produced in the United States.

By virtue of the close resemblance of Alpha Omega to A.C.E., the same modifications were required by Alberta Education at the time of initial program approval.

Audit Results

1. Fit With Alberta Programs

Content. None of the Alpha Omega course materials was identical in terms of content to the corresponding Alberta Education course or program, although some came close. The amount of overlap ranged from a low of approximately 10% for Alpha Omega Consumer Mathematics LIFEPACs as compared to Mathematics 15, to a high of 85% for the Alpha Omega materials equivalent to Mathematics 20. Across all subjects, coverage was best for high school mathematics (10-20-30) whereas content fit was poorest on the average for social studies.

With the exception of senior high mathematics and Art 1, the only other Alpha Omega materials to cover more than one-half of the objectives of the corresponding Alberta courses were junior high science and health. In the senior high sciences, adequate coverage of provincial

content varied from approximately 20% in physics to less than 50% for biology and chemistry. In language arts, just over 40% of the provincial course objectives were judged to have been satisfactorily dealt with in the Alpha Omega materials.

Of great concern is the lack of congruency at the elementary school level where approximately 75% of the provincial content for mathematics, science, health, and social studies is either omitted or inadequately covered.

Critical Thinking. One of the major objectives of the Alberta Program of Studies is the development of the skills of critical thinking. Without exception, although to a lesser extent for secondary level courses, reviewers were critical of the preponderance of drill and practice exercises and the virtual absence of inquiry-oriented activities. When the instructional materials themselves do not sufficiently promote the development of higher level cognitive objectives, the task of the classroom teacher in teaching for these skills is rendered more difficult.

The problem here identified is not generic to individualized instruction or to programmed learning. Rather the deficiency lies in the choice of format for the presentation of content and for subsequent testing. Test items do not have to measure only simple recall. They can be constructed to evaluate a student's ability to perform higher order intellectual tasks. Continuous progress and independent learning, desirable as these may be, need not be achieved at the expense of critical thinking.

Canadian Content. Two courses for which the presence of Canadian content has been deemed to be absolutely essential are language arts and social studies. In both cases the Alpha Omega materials fail to meet this criterion, undoubtedly due to the fact that the materials were originally intended for use in American schools.

Not as critical as the absence of Canadian history, geography and literature, but nonetheless objectionable, is the consistent failure to use Canadian references in Alpha Omega LIFEPACs. It is more than a minor irritation to encounter continually American currency, American place names and institutions, etc. This feature of Alpha Omega curriculum materials renders them just as questionable as if the materials were being considered for use in Alberta's public and separate schools. Where Covenant Community materials are being employed, this criticism does not apply.

S.I. Metric. An attempt has been made to introduce metric notation into both mathematics and science LIFEPACs. While it is correct to say that the content in these two subject areas is basically metric, there are inconsistencies from grade to grade as well as gaps in the introduction of S.I. metric standards. From a provincial perspective, the use of the dual system of metric and Imperial notation has been abandoned. Yet, Alpha Omega materials, reflecting American practice, use both concurrently. As a result, conversions between the two systems are frequently required in the LIFEPACs.

Unevenness in the introduction of metric was noted in the junior high LIFEPACs with grades 7 and 8 materials using metric while

the grade 9 uses Imperial. This lack of consistency tends to confuse students and at the same time creates less than a positive attitude toward the use of metric notation.

Throughout Alpha Omega materials the improper spelling of some metric units was encountered. American usage of "meter" instead of "metre" is a concern although it is not as serious a problem as is the use of commas instead of spaces to separate triads when writing numbers. Even where S.I. metric has been employed in LIFEPACs, the conventions followed are American and not Canadian. This deficiency represents a partial failure on the part of Alpha Omega materials to meet Canadian content requirements.

Alpha Omega LIFEPACs for mathematics and science go farther than some other private school programs toward meeting Canadian S.I. metric requirements. However, more needs to be done, especially in home economics where none of the measurements is metric.

Scope and Sequence. The placement of topics of study and areas of skill development in Alberta courses is determined by a series of factors including, the process of human maturation, the established principles of learning, the structure of the subject and the need for articulation of each school level with adjacent levels.

In the case of Alpha Omega materials, a majority of the decisions on sequencing of topics coincide with those made by Alberta curriculum developers. There are notable exceptions, e.g., in health where a substantial part of the provincial elementary health program has

been deferred until the junior high, and in mathematics where there are sharp differences in opinion as to the proper sequencing of important operations with decimals and fractions.

For the most part, differences in sequencing curricula are not held to be as critical as the omission of significant portions of Alberta courses from Alpha Omega curricula. Periodically, pupils in schools using Alpha Omega LIFEPACs must write provincial achievement tests or diploma examinations. When they do, the sequence in which the topics are studied may be of vital importance to their success. Major differences in sequence which might affect pupil performance on external tests should be eliminated.

Methodology. Alpha Omega LIFEPACs are learning packages which are designed both for continuous progress and independent learning. Progression from one learning pack to the next depends on satisfactory achievement in the test which concludes each unit. There is nothing wrong with this aspect of the theory on which LIFEPACs are constructed, but they do not by themselves provide for important objectives such as interacting with peers and teachers.

LIFEPACs, and hence the Alpha Omega methodology, are clearly capable of enabling pupils to proceed at their individual rates. They fall short, however, of achieving what should be their most important goal, to provide children with learning experiences which challenge their intellectual, creative capacities. A significantly large proportion of the exercises contained in LIFEPACs demands no more than rote learning.

Higher-level cognitive skills are rarely tested and without mastery of these skills, the acquisition of the power to think critically is greatly hindered.

Alberta Education has refrained from imposing a specific teaching method on teachers in provincial curricular documents, with some crucial exceptions. In Alberta social studies, mathematics and science, a set of process skill outcomes has been included as educational objectives. A method of instruction or a series of learning activities, may have been specified because of the evidence that children are unlikely to acquire these skills unless they practice them. Scientific method, social inquiry and problem solving are part of an open system in which the answers cannot always be known in advance. LIFEPACs, on the other hand, seem to have been constructed on the opposite assumption, that there is only one answer and it is already known. This practice may reflect the carrying over of the recognition and acceptance of absolutes from spiritual matters into factual areas of study.

2. Educational Soundness

The Alpha Omega LIFEPAC Curriculum Scope and Sequence is limited to a very few subjects out of the totality available to pupils in Alberta's public schools. Reviewers were unable to determine whether prescribed courses such as music, physical education and junior high options were even offered in Alpha Omega program schools, since these are not listed. One aspect of the educational soundness of any curriculum is the balance among academic, aesthetic, physical and practical elements.

Judging from the contents of the Alpha Omega LIFEPAC Curriculum Scope and Sequence, this program is very much restricted to the academic dimension, although the spiritual dimension is also well emphasized.

In addition to program balance, other indicators of educational soundness which were examined in this audit included: technical accuracy, currency, appropriateness to the developmental level of children, application of principles of learning, efficiency and standards of achievement in relation to the provincial diploma requirements.

In most subjects, reviewers found little in the LIFEPACs in the way of technical inaccuracy. Some criticism was voiced about the use of American S.I. metric notation instead of the Canadian version. Also, the accuracy of the science LIFEPACs has been challenged because of numerous errors of fact at all grade levels. One could and should argue that a Canadian curriculum is unsound if it contains almost no Canadian content.

Reviewers were unanimous in stating that LIFEPACs are well written and well organized. Directions to pupils are clear and, with the exception of documents for grade 1, the content appears to be at a suitable level for the age group. Grade 1 LIFEPACs, especially in language arts, contained language which was judged to be too abstract in the absence of concrete and direct experience with the concepts being covered.

Built into Alpha Omega LIFEPACs are several important learning principles such as drill and practice and the "spiral" curriculum. Regular testing, both initial and cumulative, is a prominent feature in

Alpha Omega materials. The major principle of pedagogy which has been incorporated into LIFEPACs is structural, namely, the concept of individualized progress. Properly executed, this concept possesses great motivational power for pupils. At the same time, having each pupil proceed at his or her own rate can be a highly efficient method of instruction in terms of the teacher meeting individual needs. In other words, the way LIFEPACs have been developed is predicated on a number of sound pedagogical principles.

What happens in the classrooms of private schools using Alpha Omega materials determines how well pupils achieve. Materials by themselves rarely determine instructional success. Consequently, it is impossible to tell for sure whether children attending these schools are adequately prepared to take provincial achievement tests in grades 3, 6 and 9, or the diploma examinations in grade 12 subjects. Based on the results of this audit, reviewers have concluded that Alpha Omega students would be at a distinct disadvantage in preparing for the diploma examinations, unless there is substantial supplementing of content by the teacher. In this respect, Alpha Omega LIFEPACs for grades 10, 11 and 12 have been judged to be inadequate.

3. Tolerance and Understanding

An important goal of the Alpha Omega program is its spiritual purpose, guiding students into a personal relationship with God, and developing knowledge, habits and attitudes related to Christian living. The program developers have attempted to accomplish this aim in two

distinct ways: through a Bible course, grades 1-12; and by integrating Christian concepts with LIFEPAC academic content. Both of these practices were rated as problematic by evaluators as they applied the tolerance and understanding criteria.

The integration of Christian concepts and the developer's interpretations of Christian beliefs presents a problem in junior high science and high school biology. The statement is made that only those scientific ideas which are in agreement with the Bible are to be believed. In the view of those who examined these documents, statements of this kind do not contribute to the formation of sound scientific attitudes. The writers of Alpha Omega science and biology materials should be more respectful toward those who approach scientific data from a differing perspective.

The Bible LIFEPACs likewise constituted a dilemma for reviewers. If they are intended to enable children to engage in religious instruction, these materials are quite satisfactory. Because all Alberta schools are permitted to offer religious instruction and also to select the religious content, an evaluation of these materials would not be required. There are no provincial criteria for approving such materials.

If, on the other hand, the Bible LIFEPACs are to be used with credit courses or junior high options, they leave a great deal to be desired. Statements to the effect that all "other" religious faiths practice "false worship"; that they worship "false gods"; and are therefore "wicked", do not promote tolerance and understanding of others. These statements themselves are sufficient justification for rejecting this set of LIFEPACs or requiring their modification. Certainly, teaching children that one's religion represents "truth" should be accompanied by the teaching of respect for, and understanding of, those who believe otherwise.

VIII. SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Program Description

Sixteen schools have been identified as using the Seventh-day Adventist (S.D.A.) program. All of these are Category 1 private schools. Four schools offer a grade 1-10 program, one school provides instruction in grades 10-12, while the remaining eleven register students in grades 1-9.

Each Seventh-day Adventist Union or Conference is expected to adhere to the North American Division and Union Conference Education Code in operating its schools. Where curriculum guides, courses of study or

syllabi are desired, the North American Division also provides a curriculum framework for each subject area. Frameworks are designed to ensure:

> distinctively Seventh-day Adventist Curricula, disciplines presented from a Biblical perspective, opportunity for student exposure to common learning areas and concepts in all subjects.[10]

However, Alberta Seventh-day Adventist schools appear to follow the Alberta curriculum for the most part. These schools use S.D.A. publications in science, language arts (reading) and health. Science and health are combined in a single set of learning resources. Thus, it is possible that health is not taught as a separate subject in S.D.A. schools.

There has been a tendency in recent years for S.D.A. schools to make increasing use of materials prescribed by Alberta Education. In fact, provincial curricula and authorized resources are utilized for all subjects in grades 9 through 12.

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[10] North American Division Office of Education, Educational Materials: A Handbook for Curriculum Frameworks, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, 1979, p. ii.

Audit Results

1. Fit With Alberta Programs

Content. In general, congruence between provincial and S.D.A. programs is of a high degree, given the circumstances noted earlier.

Of the five areas of the language arts, three (reading, writing and speaking) are given adequate treatment. An analysis of learning resources indicated inadequate coverage for listening and viewing skills. Depending on dates of publication, materials varied in their adequacy, with later publications exhibiting superiority in this regard. The major criticism of the S.D.A. language arts program was its lack of commitment to integration.

By themselves, S.D.A. science materials were not judged to provide satisfactory coverage of the Alberta curriculum. Unless this deficiency is remedied by teachers through the supplementary use of approved Alberta science learning resources, S.D.A. students would be handicapped in writing provincial achievement tests.

In S.D.A. health, about one-half of the provincial program is dealt with satisfactorily. The treatment of Nutrition is excellent, but coverage of Life Careers is non-existent.

Critical Thinking. Seventh-day Adventist science-health materials emphasize scientific inquiry. In language arts, reviewers found the emphasis on developing critical thinking skills to be adequate.

Canadian Content. In the opinion of program evaluators, the amount of Canadian literature in most readers is satisfactory, although at the primary level Canadian stories appear to be lacking.

S.I. Metric. S.D.A. science-health materials are not metricated. Imperial units were found throughout. Unless this defect is corrected by the classroom teacher, students would be operating under a handicap. They would be using metricated mathematics resources while at the same time encountering an exclusively Imperial measurement system in science-health.

Scope and Sequence. Except for the questionable placement of certain health topics in the science program, no serious criticisms regarding scope and sequence were made.

Methodology. Instructional practices required of teachers using S.D.A. materials do not appear to differ substantially from those which one would expect to see employed by public and separate school teachers using Alberta curricula and resources.

2. Educational Soundness

In all three subject areas examined, S.D.A. resources were rated as adequate in terms of their approach to pedagogy. Science-health materials were judged to be conducive to the development of science process skills, and to encourage research and critical thinking.

Language arts resources were rated as exceptionally sound, with the potential to facilitate a high level of achievement on the part of students.

S.D.A. materials are reasonably current and generally accurate. Sequencing of topics is satisfactory, apart from the health topics noted earlier.

Differences between the three S.D.A. programs and their Alberta counterparts were not serious, if one excludes the presentation of creation as a fact, without the inclusion of commonly accepted scientific explanations.

Based on the audit results for grade 1 to 8 materials and assuming competent classroom instruction, pupils in S.D.A. schools appear to receive an adequate preparation for the senior high grades and the successful completion of diploma requirements.

3. Tolerance and Understanding

Reviewers of primary language arts resources were critical of these materials because of sexual and religious stereotyping. Most of these resources were produced in 1965 which may explain the presence of outdated sex role portrayals. All primary resources were judged to be problematic or unacceptable.

The presence of a broader range of literature in grade 4-8 resources resulted in a much improved rating. There are still some problems arising from references to traditional, pre-1965 sex roles, but two-thirds of the resources were given an acceptable rating.

The strong Christian perspective of S.D.A. materials leads to a virtual ignoring of other religious views. Where presented, other religions are treated rather intolerantly. However, the Christian orientation in science materials does not interfere with good science teaching, as defined by Alberta Education.

Concern was expressed over dogmatic language, which appears in health sections of the science-health materials, toward lifestyles not in keeping with Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.

IX. MENNONITE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Program Description

Mennonite schools offer instruction in grades 1-9 only at the present time, although some thought is being given to the establishment of a high school in the Calgary area. In addition, since all but one of the 13 Mennonite schools are in Category 4, most of their students would not have access to a high school diploma. This fact distinguishes Mennonite schools from most other private schools.

Most Mennonite schools use the Curriculum Guide for the Church of God in Christ Mennonite Parochial Schools[11].

This document is not really a curriculum guide but rather a list of approved textbooks for each subject at each grade level. Presumably, each school makes its own decision regarding selections and suppliers.

Modifications requested when the Kneehill Christian School program in Linden was approved in 1978 included:

1. S.I. Metric. Arithmetic, mathematics and science courses were to reflect metric measurement.

2. Canadian Content. Suitable Canadian studies were to be added to social studies at a number of grade levels.

3. Obsolescence. Modern materials were to be substituted for outdated social studies resources.

4. Religious Intolerance. Sections in one social studies text which were judged to teach religious intolerance were to be avoided.

5. Program Breadth. Music, art and physical education were to be provided in grades 1-6, and physical education in grades 7-9.

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[11] Four guides, for 1977-78, 1980-81, 1983-84 and 1984-85, were available for inspection. Little change in the list of titles can be discerned from one year to the next.

Audit Results

1. Fit With Alberta Program

Content. Congruence between the Mennonite and Alberta programs is greatest for science and mathematics, particularly at the elementary level. In grade 9 mathematics and in junior high science only 50 percent of the provincial program is covered by Mennonite resources.

Coverage of provincial philosophy and objectives was very poor in language arts with only one-quarter of Mennonite resources rated as adequate. The same problem was identified in music and in elementary health.

The most serious weakness in Mennonite instructional materials appears to be in social studies where the content fit is extremely poor. It is probably safe to say that the 1981 Alberta social studies program is not being used in Mennonite schools.

The main areas of inadequate curricular treatment in Mennonite resources are as follows:

- Language arts - limited treatment of listening, speaking and viewing;
- Music - insufficient attention paid to singing and too few opportunities to use musical instruments;
- Science - inadequate coverage of science process skills;
- Mathematics - incomplete coverage of grade 9 algebra;
- Social Studies - an almost total absence of inquiry skills and the values component.

Critical Thinking. In two major areas of the curriculum, concerns were expressed by reviewers regarding the lack of emphasis on developing the skills of critical thinking. These areas were language arts and junior high science. One could conclude from these deficiencies and from the absence of the inquiry skills in the social studies program that little attention is being paid to the higher-order thinking processes.

Canadian Content. Where the Alberta curriculum is being followed, i.e., in elementary mathematics and science, no problems were encountered regarding Canadian content. In social studies, ten of the sixteen audited resources involve Canadian topics or events.

However, there is no Canadian literature in the language arts learning resources, and the remaining six social studies resources neither fit the curriculum nor contain Canadian material.

S.I. Metric. The usage of S.I. metric notation is most important in mathematics and in elementary science, and it is present in Mennonite texts. The absence of the province's standard of measurement is most notable in junior high science where American resources are employed, and in social studies where the resources are totally out of date.

Scope and Sequence. No serious problems relating to curriculum sequencing were identified. In most Mennonite course

materials the content scope is broad, even though the fit with Alberta's courses might not have been good. One exception is the Mennonite music program for which the scope is extremely limited, as compared to its provincial counterpart.

Methodology. There is no indication from the audit of Mennonite learning resources of any departure from traditional instructional practices. Group instruction, in single and in split grade situations, appears to be the rule. In this respect, there is no evidence to suggest that children attending Mennonite schools are at a disadvantage or at an advantage, as compared to children in other schools.

2. Educational Soundness

The criteria used in making judgements of the educational soundness include technical accuracy, appropriateness of materials and methodology to the target audience, and the adequacy of the curriculum in preparing students to meet the requirements of the high school diploma.

Mennonite school resources in mathematics and science are accurate and up-to-date, except for junior high science. Students in these courses would not be handicapped in writing provincial achievement tests, other things being equal. The omission of a significant portion of the junior high science program would put Mennonite students at a disadvantage in comparison to public school students.

The areas of Mennonite curriculum which are most unsound from an educational perspective are social studies and health. In both cases, the resources being used are quite outdated. The risk of misinforming students is great since the pictorial and statistical data do not reflect current reality.

The final and most serious criticism of Mennonite learning resources is centered on the language arts. Because there is little provision for extended writing activities and because the structure of the Mennonite language arts program is completely outdated, students will not be properly prepared to enter high schools and ultimately to satisfy the English 30 or 33 requirements for the diploma.

3. Tolerance and Understanding

Mennonite school instructional materials tend to portray men and women in traditional sex roles as would be expected in textual materials that are 20 or more years old. This is particularly true in social studies and health, but it is also the case to a lesser extent in junior high language arts. Older materials may be used in Mennonite classrooms because the system of beliefs prevailing in Mennonite communities strongly supports traditional values.

In junior high science, intolerance toward the principle of open-mindedness in science was detected. Any conclusions or statements which differ from the biblical references found throughout the text are rejected. Man is depicted as being unable to arrive at truth through thinking and reasoning because of his sinful nature. This belief is in

conflict with the position taken by the scientific community at large and by Alberta Education.

X. A BEKA INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Program Description

In one sense a report on A BEKA materials does not belong in a review of Alberta private school programs. Alberta Education is not aware of any private school which makes exclusive use of these resources or which refers to itself as an "A BEKA" school. Materials available from A BEKA Book Publications of Pensacola, Florida, have been audited because the firm is an important source of learning resources for Mennonite Parochial schools. The strong Christian influence in these materials has resulted in their use in other Alberta private schools, as well.

Table 5 provides a summary, by subject and grade, of A BEKA materials audited by Alberta Education.

TABLE 5

SUMMARY OF AUDITED A BEKA INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Subject	Grades	Number of Resources
Language Arts	1-12	75
Social Studies	2, 5-7, 10-12	7
Science	1-9	12
Music	1-6	9
Mathematics	1-12	12
Total		115

The 115 items covered in this part of the audit were included in the total of 2255 resources mentioned earlier in Table 2.

Since there is no A BEKA private school operating in Alberta, it is imperative that the limitations of the audit results be understood. How widespread is the use of A BEKA resources is not known. Some private schools use some materials, but it is extremely doubtful that all of the reviewed texts are being utilized in Alberta private schools at this time. The major use of A BEKA materials evaluations is in the future when the materials are encountered by Alberta Education personnel during school visits, or when these materials are identified in an application for program approval.

Audit Results

1. Fit With Alberta Programs

Content Match. A BEKA Book Publications would not provide Alberta Education with curriculum guides or programs of studies for their materials. In the absence of these documents, evaluators had little alternative but to assume that learning resources assigned to a particular grade or course represented the curriculum for that subject. Comparisons were then made between individual A BEKA texts and the corresponding Alberta Program of Studies content outline.

A BEKA elementary school language arts materials collectively cover a large part of the Alberta program. Oral language, both listening and speaking, and viewing do not receive adequate treatment nor is there

sufficient provision for the development of writing abilities. At the secondary level, A BEKA materials are adequate in terms of the amount of literature included, spelling and vocabulary development. The emphasis on the mechanics of language (grammar) is excessive. Omitted from the materials are Canadian literature, and activities designed to promote the development of oral language and viewing skills. The provision for student writing is inadequate.

Materials making up the A BEKA music program contain few Canadian songs. All patriotic selections refer to the United States and there is a lack of contemporary musical material. No references were found to skill development in music reading and creating, playing of instruments and listening. Approximately one-fifth of the Alberta elementary music program is covered by A BEKA materials.

In science, coverage of the Alberta core program by A BEKA resources is generally poor, ranging from approximately 15 percent in Division I to 40 percent in Division II. At the junior high school level about 90 percent of the Alberta grade 8 science course is provided for in A BEKA materials, but adequate treatment for grades 7 and 9 objectives occurs in only one-third of the cases. Overall, the major area of neglect is in the inquiry-process skills dimension of the science program. This is the cornerstone of the Alberta science program.

A BEKA social studies materials consisted entirely of history and geography texts, with not all grades being covered. Materials assigned to particular grades almost never fit the 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Canadian content is negligible. What there is has been written from an American perspective. Knowledge objectives tend to be at a recall level, with little attention being paid to concept and generalization development. Inquiry and participation skills are completely ignored.

Of the five Alberta mathematics study areas only those related to computation receive suitable emphasis in A BEKA texts. Measurement, geometry and graphing objectives are largely omitted while problem solving is inadequately treated. At the junior high level approximately one-half of the provincial objectives are left out. Algebra is fairly well addressed but geometry, measurement, graphing, ratio and proportion are either omitted or poorly covered. A BEKA senior high mathematics is university oriented and emphasizes theory. Coverage of the Mathematics 10 core objectives was approximately 70 percent but this situation deteriorated to 50 percent for Mathematics 20 and to less than 40 percent for Mathematics 30.

In summary, A BEKA instructional materials were never intended for Alberta school children. Consequently, individual texts rarely match the grade and subject to which they would be assigned in this province. In general, congruence between A BEKA instructional materials and the Alberta Program of Studies is at an unacceptably low level.

2. Educational Soundness

Educational soundness refers to the technical accuracy of curriculum, its appropriateness to the maturity levels of students, the incorporation of principles of pedagogy in the design, and the efficiency of the methodology used. As well, important questions have been raised about whether the achievement standards expected by the curriculum are adequate and whether, once subjected to the curriculum, students will have received adequate preparation for a high school diploma.

The A BEKA mathematics resources, by and large, are workbook-practice oriented and emphasize rote memorization of content. The texts do not appear to be concerned with progressive development and understanding of mathematical concepts and relationships. Use of manipulatives is limited and activities involving calculators or computers are not integrated within the program to complement the learning of mathematics. On the other hand, topics are reintroduced and reviewed throughout the series to ensure concept and skill retention.

In language arts, the teaching techniques do not provide for active involvement of students in meaningful language learning situations. Very few writing assignments are given. The focus is on learning abstract rules of grammar and usage with little or no opportunity to apply these rules in meaningful language use. The heavy phonics emphasis in two of three elementary reading series would be challenged by most reading experts as being an inaccurate approach to

instructing children in this vital area. Comprehension materials attribute natural phenomena to a purely religious origin while viewing scientific explanations with skepticism.

Much of the content in elementary language texts appears to be above the maturity level of the intended students particularly because of the abstract nature of the grammar and usage content and the way it is presented. In the spelling series, the difficulty level of some of the words, especially in the grade 5 and 6 books, appears to be too high.

While the accuracy of A BEKA science resources is generally adequate, some outdated information is presented, e.g., planetary orbits of the Bohr atomic model. However, scientific accuracy suffers most notably in discussion of creation versus evolution. An erroneous comparison is made between "spontaneous generation" and evolution in both the grade 7 and grade 8 books. Some very simplistic and superficial arguments with little scientific basis are used to refute some very complex theories such as geologic time and the "geologic column".

Although the nature of science is discussed quite adequately in several of the texts, the dogmatic denouncement of evolution and "evolutionists" leads in many instances to self-contradiction and errors of interpretation and fact. That science cannot make valid statements about what is not directly observable, as an example, is contradicted in discussion of the nature of science elsewhere in the A BEKA resources. Evolution is described as "anti-science" and a "threat to modern science", with varying degrees of inaccuracy in the supporting

discussion. In one instance evolution is refuted largely because the universe is too complex for evolution to be a reasonable theory. There seems to be a good deal of confusion beween what is fact and what is religious conviction, thereby significantly reducing the benefits of any science teaching that might occur.

None of the A BEKA instructional material for use at the high school level was judged to be completely adequate in preparing students to write the Alberta Advanced Diploma Examinations. This could present a very serious problem for students whose instruction in diploma subjects is based solely upon these textual resources.

3. Tolerance and Understanding

In applying the tolerance and understanding criteria (Appendix II), evaluators were essentially asking three questions:

> Do the materials avoid unfair or inaccurate judgements about others, including members of minority groups?
>
> Do the materials help to nurture a positive self-image by taking a positive approach toward others, including members of minority groups?
>
> Do the materials promote the use of critical thinking skills in arriving at interpretations of the world and the people within it?

As one would expect, religious references are extensive in A BEKA materials. In mathematics and music, because of their technical nature, A BEKA materials neither hinder nor promote tolerance and understanding of others. Perhaps this is because these subjects rarely deal with issues of age, sex, race, handicap socio-economic status or political belief.

In language arts, two-thirds of A BEKA materials for elementary grades and one half of those for secondary grades were rated as acceptable. The remaining materials were either problematic or unacceptable because of sexual stereotyping, religious or racial intolerance, or a combination of these. While the selections in literature texts were quite tolerant toward other religions, the introductory statements to these selections displayed intolerance. The religious values of the authors were questioned, suggesting that Christian principles were lacking.

A BEKA science resources were rated acceptable on all criteria except for the unbalanced, dogmatic treatment of the origins of the universe. Those who hold beliefs that are contrary to a fundamental and literal interpretation of the Bible are looked upon as opposites to "thinking men". Evolutionists are scientists who have rejected the Bible and the word of God.

Serious problems were also encountered in social studies with respect to stereotyping of Natives and male/female roles. World events, and United States history in particular, are portrayed from a Christocentric perspective. Causation, with respect to historical events, is attributed to the will of God. No consideration is given to alternative, multi-causal explanations. One text, United States History, was rated as unacceptable in Alberta "because of the intolerance, racism, sexism, religious bias and national chauvinism displayed in the first two chapters".

It is difficult to view most A BEKA materials as being satisfactory in promoting tolerance and understanding due to the lack of emphasis on developing and applying the skills of critical thinking. Content is presented at the memory or recall level. All too few opportunities arise for questioning and searching, for engaging in systematic inquiry and problem solving.

XI. THE ISSUES

Three questions were asked during this audit of private school programs and learning resources:

1. Congruence. How close is the content match between private school learning resources and corresponding provincial course outlines?

2. Educational Soundness. How sound are private school programs and learning resources in terms of accuracy, methodology, and preparation for provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations?

3. Tolerance and Understanding. How adequate are private school programs and learning resources in terms of fostering tolerance and understanding of minority groups and others?

In the preceding five sections of this report, as the results of the audit were presented, these questions have been answered for each of the four private school programs selected for evaluation, and for A BEKA learning resources. The first three purposes of this study have thus been accomplished. The remaining tasks of the private school program audit were to endeavour to identify the policy issues which have emerged from the audit process, and to recommend policy initiatives which would enable Alberta Education to deal with these issues.

Identifying the Issues

The standards used by Alberta Education in attempting to answer these questions were the same ones used by curriculum and learning resource committees working on provincial programs. In part, these standards were also used in giving initial approval to the same private school programs. The only additions were provincial criteria introduced in the intervening period of time, i.e. tolerance and understanding and new content specifications.

Because it was not feasible during the time available to evaluate private school programs directly through on-site visits, selected programs have been assessed through available instructional materials. In the process, these materials have been compared with the objectives and philosophy of Alberta Programs of Studies.

The four private school programs covered by this review were not selected at random. Together with A BEKA resources, the instructional materials used in these four groups of schools constitute the vast majority of private schools' programs originally approved as alternatives to the Alberta program. When revised Alberta standards are applied to these private school programs, significant discrepancies appear. Some of these problems were identified in the beginning, but new problems have arisen due to more stringent standards being applied to provincial programs.

As a result, two fundamental policy questions have emerged:

1. Given the results of this review, should the four alternative private school programs continue to be approved?

2. What modifications might be required before approval can be given?

The answers to these questions obviously require the making of a number of policy decisions. Issue identification is a necessary first step in policy formation and that is the purpose of this section of this paper.

The Issues

For the purpose of this paper an issue is defined whenever a significant discrepancy has been noted between the provincial standards for content, soundness, and tolerance and understanding, and the instructional materials for a given private school program. Basically, a discrepancy has been judged to be significant if its presence would have led either to the rejection of a provincial learning resource or to the modification of that resource or program.

Some discrepancies appeared to be generic, while others were specific to one or a few but not to all of the groups of private school resources which were examined. As the analysis of audit results progressed, it also became clear that the content of certain issues overlapped that of other issues. Thus, it was preferable to group the issues around the two policy questions which include the three criterion questions that formed the basis for the audit.

Issues Associated With Policy Question 1: Should alternative private school programs continue to be approved?

Issue 1. Congruence With Alberta Program

As was evident from the audit results presented in the preceding sections of this report, none of the selected private school programs

came very close to matching the Alberta Programs of Studies in all subjects at all grade levels. One is then obliged to ask:

"How different can an alternative private school program be and still receive Ministerial approval?" That is the fundamental issue.

Discrepancies were noted across a number of audit dimensions and these have been listed below as sub-issues.

1.1 Content. Should private school programs be approved when they do not satisfy Alberta Education requirements for:

Coverage of provincial course content,

Canadian content,

S.I. metric standards?

1.2 Mandatory Courses.[12] Should private school programs be approved when they do not appear to include "mandatory" courses such as health, music, physical education or art, or when they fail to make adequate provision for these courses?

1.3 Methodology. In those courses where the method of study is an integral part of the content of a provincial course, as in science and social studies, should private schools be required to teach for the process skills as well as the content objectives?

1.4 Sequence. Should private schools be permitted to rearrange the content of courses and programs as long as objectives coincide with the Alberta Program of Studies at fixed points such as grades 3, 6, 9 and 12?

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[12] For the purpose of this paper, mandatory courses have been defined as courses that all students must study and all schools must offer, either through direct instruction or through the Alberta Correspondence School. See Appendix IV for definitions of other related terms.

Issue 2. Protection of Student Rights

Because private school program materials do not adequately cover provincial content, students in these schools are at a definite disadvantage relative to their public and separate school peers in meeting the standards of provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations. The generic question is:

How can the provincial government ensure that standards of achievement in private schools are comparable to those of students in public schools, at the same time respecting the right of parents to choose the education of their children?

2.1 Provincial Achievement Tests. Should private school be required to offer the core program in those subjects for which grade 3, 6 and 9 provincial achievement tests are administered?

2.2 High School Diploma. Should private schools be required to adhere to the Alberta Program of Studies for diploma subjects, in order to protect the student's right of access to the Alberta High School Diploma?

Issue 3. High School Diploma Standards

Some elective and mandatory courses used in private schools were judged to be inadequate because the content was misplaced or because the time-credit relationship did not meet provincial standards. Carried to an extreme, this state of affairs could lead to a lower quality for the high school diploma awarded private school students.

Should private schools be permitted to offer high school courses in which provincial content standards or time-credit standards are not met?

Issue 4. Obsolete Instructional Materials

Some private schools have selected instructional materials that are so out-of-date that students will be seriously misinformed if their instruction is not supplemented in a major way by the teacher.

Should private schools be required to use instructional materials that are as least as modern and accurate as those authorized by the Minister for use in public and separate schools?

Issue 5. Tolerance and Understanding

Auditors noted the absence of formal objectives and activities dealing with the development of critical thinking skills. This is primarily a content discrepancy. But, this deficiency is also an important criterion in judging materials for their capacity to promote tolerance and understanding of minority groups and others. Some cases of religious and racial intolerance were identified in private school instructional materials.

Should the tolerance and understanding criteria which have been employed with provincial curricula and learning resources also apply to private schools?

Issue 6. Bible Courses

Religious instruction is permitted in both public and private schools in Alberta. Where this instruction is being offered for high school credit, the usual method is to develop and have approved a locally-developed course such as Religious Studies 15-25-35. The content of private school Bible courses does not meet the tolerance and

understanding requirements which have been set for Religious Studies.

Should private schools which offer credit in Religious Studies be required to meet the same standards for these courses as public and separate schools?

Issues Associated With Policy Question 2: If current alternative private school programs are not approved, what modifications are required in order to make them eligible for approval?

The answer to this second question plainly depends on the manner in which the issues associated with the first question are resolved. In fact, it could be argued that the issues underlying both questions are common ones, by and large. The only separate issue of consequence which might be raised at this time is that of fairness.

Issue 7. Fairness in Making Changes

If private school program revisions are required, the changes may be of considerable magnitude. Not only will a great deal of time and effort be required to modify curricula or to find suitable replacements for instructional materials, but the operators of private schools may be put to considerable expense in the process.

If modifications in private school programs are to be made, how can these be arranged so as to be fair to private school operators while at the same time protecting the rights of students?

Reviewing the Issues

The seven issues and their accompanying sub-issues were not the only policy matters which emerged during this study, regarding the approval of private school programs. Another set of questions having to do with program approval procedures, including follow-up and monitoring, and implementation, was uncovered. Although this group of questions is perceived to be outside the scope of a program audit, all of these matters have been addressed in the final section of this report under Conclusions and Recommendations.

The issues which have been singled out for further attention are those judged to be the most crucial, given the circumstances under which this review was conducted. Virtually all of the issues are independent of particular private school programs. Because these questions are generic, their answers should provide a solid foundation on which to formulate policy for approving private school programs.

XII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final section of this report a set of principles employed in making judgments is first articulated. Then, the general conclusions to the study and specific recommendations for dealing with the policy issues are provided.

Basic Principles

The six principles upon which the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report are based have been identified. They are:

1. The Goals of Basic Education for Alberta apply to all Alberta school children, whether public, separate or private.

2. The curriculum studied by all Alberta school children must be associated with, and contribute to, the achievement of the Goals of Basic Education for Alberta.

3. The province, through Alberta Education, is responsible for defining the content of the curriculum (the Program of Studies), and for setting the expected standards of student achievement.

4. The right of access of every Alberta student to a high school diploma must be protected by Alberta Education.

5. Alberta Education is responsible for providing consultative services to and for monitoring the operation of all schools receiving provincial funding or approval.

6. Consistent with the intent of the principles outlined above, parents have the responsibility to participate in the education of their children and the right to choose the schools they will attend.

Conclusions

Two policy questions were derived in Section XI of this report:

1. Should alternative private school programs continue to be approved?

2. If current alternative private school programs are not approved, what modifications are required to make them eligible for approval?

In response to these questions five general conclusions have been drawn.

Conclusion 1. Content Match

The content of the four private school programs and the A BEKA learning resources do not cover adequately the content of the Alberta Programs of Studies.

This fact is not surprising since not only has the content of individual provincial courses changed in recent years but the conditions under which alternative private school programs were originally approved have changed. The introduction of diploma examinations and provincial achievement tests, and the public commitment by the province to the fostering of tolerance and understanding of minority groups have rendered obsolete the initial set of approval criteria.

Conclusion 2. Re-submission of Programs

Given the changed circumstances referred to above, private school groups should re-submit their programs for approval, in accordance with the findings of this audit.

A concurrent, although unrelated, concern is the existence of irrefutable evidence that conditions imposed by Alberta Education at the time of initial approval have still not been fully met, although several years have elapsed. The absence of compliance makes the conditions for approval largely meaningless.

Conclusion 3. Monitoring by Alberta Education

Past monitoring of private school programs has not been adequate. Procedures for closer monitoring of alternative private school programs should be developed to ensure compliance with policy and with conditions attached to program approval.

At the same time more frequent contacts with teachers and operators in these schools would lead to greater opportunity for the provision of consultative services.

Conclusion 4. Program Modifications

Based on a thorough analysis of available program documents and learning resources, auditors have concluded that most children registered in private schools offering an alternative curriculum would be at a marked disadvantage to public and separate children in taking provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations. Since it is the province's responsibility to guarantee the right of access to a diploma for all students, this situation is unacceptable. Modifications in alternative programs should be made to ensure that the core content of optional and mandatory courses is fully covered.

Conclusion 5. Implementing Change

A procedure for modifying alternative private school programs must be developed, one which is both fair and feasible. The results of the audit audit of private school curricula have made it clear that course upgrading will not be a simple matter. To rewrite all the elementary, junior high and senior high learning packs so that they meet new program

approval criteria could take several years. Hence, it will not be possible to get immediate compliance with this policy even if private schools agree to modify their curriculum.

In addition, requirements for change directed at the four private school groups covered by this study automatically apply to all other private schools. As a consequence, there will be a heavy and sustained demand on the manpower resources of Alberta Education, for program evaluation, approval and monitoring.

Most importantly, the implementation procedure must be fair to both private school students and to private school operators. Access to a high school diploma must be improved as soon as possible. At the same time, private school operators must be given a reasonable opportunity to carry out the task of revision, with the assistance of Departmental personnel.

Recommendations

Specific recommendations for addressing the policy issues previously identified are now presented under three headings:

I. Approval of Alternative Private School Programs.

II. Monitoring Alternative Private School Programs.

III. Implementing the New Private School Program Approval Procedures.

The recommendations which follow are directed at private schools offering the regular or standard curriculum. Excluded are special purpose private schools in Categories II and III, and Category I Driver Training Schools.

I. Approval of Alternative Private School Programs

Recommendation 1. Statement of Philosophy

It is recommended that each request by a private school authority for approval of its program of studies be accompanied by a full statement of the philosophy under which the school is to operate.

Recommendation 2. Adherence to Alberta Program of Studies

It is recommended that all private schools be required to provide instruction in the mandatory courses as follows:

1. Elementary - language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education, art and music.

2. Junior High - language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health, physical education and some A/B options.

3. Senior High - language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, physical education, plus sufficient optional[13] courses to enable a student to earn 100 credits.

It may be necessary for private schools to augment their programs through Alberta Correspondence School courses.

Recommendation 3. Criteria for Approval

It is recommended that proposed alternative private school programs be approved provided they meet the following criteria:

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[13] Please see Appendix IV for the definition of optional courses.

3.1 High School Credit Courses

Private school courses bearing the same titles as provincial courses must include, as a minimum, the course content contained in the Program of Studies for Senior High Schools and in the Content Specifications for Diploma Subjects.

3.2 Core and Elective Content[14]

Each private school course bearing the name of an existing provincial course shall cover the core content of the equivalent provincial course. In addition, each course must contain an elective portion, in the same manner as provincial courses do.

3.3 Canadian Content/Orientation

Where required and when appropriate, private school course content shall be based upon Canadian culture, context and institutions.

3.4 S.I. Metric Notation

Where applicable, units of measurement and scientific notation shall be S.I. Metric (Canadian).

3.5 Time-Credit Relationship

All private school courses at the high school level, whether provincial or ministerially approved, shall adhere to the same time-credit relationship as for public and separate schools, namely 125 hours for a 5-credit course and 62.5 hours for a 3-credit course.

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[14] Please see Appendix IV for definitions of core and elective content.

3.6 Tolerance and Understanding

All private school courses, provincial or ministerially approved, must satisfy the provincial criteria of fostering tolerance, understanding and respect for minorities and others.

Recommendation 4. Methodology of Instruction.

It is recommended that private schools continue to determine their own method of instruction, provided:

4.1 all provincial core objectives (knowledge, skills and attitudes) receive adequate treatment;

4.2 the time-credit requirement listed in Recommendation 3.5 is observed.

Recommendation 5. Program Organization

It is recommended that private schools be permitted to:

5.1 Reorganize the content of the elementary or junior high or senior high school program by combining two or more courses, provided that of the objectives of the courses are thereby met, e.g., health and science.

5.2 Alter the sequence of topics within a grade or across several grades, provided its students cover the same core content as their public school counterparts are expected to complete by four checkpoints, by the ends of grades 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Recommendation 6. Controversial Issues

Since the provisions of Alberta's Controversial Issues Policy apply equally to private and public schools, it is recommended that private schools continue to have the right to advocate particular values and to take special positions with respect to controversial issues. It is understood that in such matters alternative explanations will be presented in the first place.

II. Monitoring Alternative Private School Programs

Recommendation 7. Provincial Achievement Tests

It is recommended that the achievement of all grade 3, 6 and 9 private school students be monitored by requiring them to write scheduled provincial achievement tests, subject to provincial guidelines.

Recommendation 8. Instructional Materials

It is recommended that private school authorities:

8.1 desiring to substitute instructional materials for those prescribed by the Minister comply with the requirements of School Act Regulation 224/75, i.e., notify the Minister of Education in writing of their action (board resolution).

8.2 using instructional materials other than those approved by Alberta Education (basic, recommended and supplementary) be responsible for ensuring that the resources meet the provincial tolerance and understanding criteria.

8.3 be required to use instructional materials at least as current as those authorized by the Minister for use in public and separate schools.

Recommendation 9. Locally Developed Courses

It is recommended that:

9.1 private school authorities wishing to offer courses other than those prescribed by the Minister comply with the requirements outlined for locally-developed courses contained in the Junior-Senior High School Handbook.

9.2 private schools be permitted to offer Religious Studies 15-25-35 provided they use one of the currently approved versions, or they develop and submit for approval their own versions in accordance with provincial procedures and criteria.

Recommendation 10. Curriculum Updating

It is recommended that:

10.1 When an existing provincial course is revised (new curriculum guide, etc.), private schools using that course be required to adhere to the public school implementation schedule.

10.2 When a private school alters the content of a course previously approved by the Minister, the course be re-submitted to Alberta Education for approval.

10.3 Approval of alternative private school programs be for a time specific, e.g., five years, after which time such programs must be re-submitted to Alberta Education for approval.

III. Implementing New Private School Program Approval Procedures

Recommendation 11. A Schedule for Compliance

It is recommended that schools not following the provincial curriculum be given a choice of electing to use provincial curricula, or of modifying their courses as required and re-submitting them for approval.

It is further recommended that:

11.1 Schools opting to use provincial curricula convert their programs effective September 1, 1985, for grade 12 courses and by September 1, 1986 for the remaining grades.

11.2 Schools electing to comply with policy by revision be required to do so in two stages.

11.2.1 junior and senior high course modifications completed and approved by June 30, 1986, and implemented for the 1986-87 school year;

11.2.2 elementary school programs revised and approved by June 30, 1987, for implementation in 1987-88.

In both 11.2.1 and 11.2.2, schools would be permitted to use present courses pending revision.

11.3 Scools unable to comply with the above schedule may submit an alternative schedule for approval.

Recommendation 12. Diploma Examination Subjects

It is recommended that all private schools offering instruction in high school courses be informed that they will be required to adhere to provincial curricula as outlined in the Program of Studies for the Senior High School.

It is further recommended that additional copies of the Content Specifications and Examination Blueprints for diploma courses be forwarded to all such schools.

Recommendation 13. Consultative Services

It is recommended that Alberta Education provide consultative services to private schools undertaking program revisions. Audit report information should be disseminated to regional offices and inservice sessions held with regional office consultants as soon as possible.

Recommendation 14. Division of Responsibility

It is recommended that primary responsibility within Alberta Education be assigned as follows:

14.1 Program revision and approval, policy compliance

- Regional Office, assisted by Program Development

14.2 Program evaluation

- Program Development Division (Curriculum and Language Services Branches), assisted by Program Delivery personnel.

14.3 Program Delivery (Regional Offices) and Program Development (Curriculum and Language Services Branches) share responsiblity for providing advice and assistance to private school operators regarding course modification.

Recommendation 15. Directing Implementation

It is recommended that implementation be treated as a project and that one individual in the Program Delivery Division be assigned responsiblity for administering and supervising the implementation of private school program initiatives for the next two years.

Summary and Concluding Statement

This review of selected private school programs had several major purposes. The first of these was to audit four private school programs, through their instructional materials, in terms of curricular content, educational soundness and fostering of tolerance and understanding for minority groups and others. In carrying out this task, each of these program elements was compared with the corresponding provincial course, using Alberta Education criteria and guidelines.

The information gleaned from audits of private school programs was required to achieve the second purpose, namely to answer this question:

> Given the new circumstances under which public and separate curricula are being judged, should alternative school programs, initially approved several years ago, continue to be approved? If not, what modifications are required before approval can be given?

The findings of the audit are that the private school programs under review do not provide adequate coverage of the Alberta Programs of Studies. Furthermore, because of content deficiencies, most private

school children would be handicapped in writing provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations. Since all Alberta school children should have equal access to a high school diploma, and since alternative private school programs are inadequate for this purpose, the majority of private school programs were judged to be unsound. Private school programs and learning resources also fell short of the criteria for meeting tolerance and understanding of minority groups and others, particularly with respect to the development of skills of critical thinking.

The conclusions reached in this review are that alternative private school programs should be re-submitted for approval, and that operators either use the Alberta Programs of Studies or modify their curricula in accordance with revised provincial criteria.

To determine appropriate criteria for approving alternative private school programs, the issues were then identified. The issues were also used, in concert with a set of basic principles, to formulate policy recommendations for consideration by Alberta Education. The completion of this task represented the accomplishment of the final and most important purpose of this review.

It is hoped that through the fifteen recommendations contained in the report, Alberta Education will have a solid foundation on which to formulate a coherent, defensible policy for approving and monitoring alternative private school programs. Alberta Education will also have a consistent set of procedures for implementing the new approvals policy.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF SUPPLIERS
OF
PRIVATE SCHOOL
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

SOURCES OF PRIVATE SCHOOL PROGRAM MATERIALS

1. Accelerated Christian Education

Accelerated Christian Education Canada
School Services
Box 1360
PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE, Manitoba
R1N 3N9

2. Alpha-Omega

A.D.S. Academic Distribution Services Inc.
201-3310 Fraser Street
VANCOUVER, B.C.
V5V 4C1

3. Seventh-day Adventist

Alberta Conference of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church
P.O. Box 5007
RED DEER, Alberta
T4N 6A1

4. Mennonite Parochial

Church of God in Christ, Mennonite
CROOKED CREEK, Alberta
T0H 0Y0

Christian Light Publications, Inc.
P.O. Box 1126
HARRISONBURG, Virginia
22801

Gordonville Print Shop
GORDONVILLE, Pennsylvania
17529

Pathway Publishing Corporation
Route #4, Box 266
LA GRANGE, Indiana
46761

Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc.
CROCKETT, Kentucky
41413

5. Covenant Community Centre

Basic Educational Consultants
12325 - 140 Street
EDMONTON, Alberta
T5L 2C9

APPENDIX II

TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING
CRITERIA

TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

CRITERIA FOR MAKING JUDGEMENTS

1. Where judgements of others are to be made, do the programs and supporting materials promote fair assessments, avoiding unfair or inaccurate judgements based on alleged general characteristics relating to racial or ethnic origin, religious affiliation, age, sex or handicap?

2. Do the programs and supporting materials help to nurture a positive self-image in all students by taking an essentially positive approach to human similarities and differences arising from racial or ethnic origin, religious affiliation, age, sex or handicap?

3. Do the programs and supporting materials contain either implicit or explicit generalizations relating to racial or ethnic origin, religious affiliation, age, sex or handicap that may tend to promote unfair or inaccurate judgements of individuals or groups?

4. Do the programs and supporting materials convey that excellence in human endeavour may be found in different ways in all human groups?

5. Do the programs and supporting materials, by omission, fail to take advantage of content or techniques that could assist the teacher in dealing positively with tolerance and understanding?

6. Do the programs and supporting materials implicitly and explicitly convey the nature and value of critical thinking in constructing our everyday interpretations of the world and the people within it?

APPENDIX III

PRIVATE SCHOOL CATEGORIES

PRIVATE SCHOOL CATEGORIES

Category 1 - Employs only teachers qualified to teach in Alberta. Instructional program is prescribed or approved by the Minister.

Category 2 - For the Handicapped.
- Instructional program is satisfactory to the Minister.

Category 3 - After-hours language immersion programs.
- Employs only Alberta qualified teachers at High School Level.

Category 4 - Instructional program is prescribed or approved by the Minister.
- Not eligible for grants.
- Students not eligible for high school credits nor to sit for High School Diploma Examinations unless age 19.

APPENDIX IV

DEFINITIONS

DEFINITIONS

1. Mandatory courses - courses that all students must study and all schools must offer either through direct instruction or the Alberta Correspondence School.

2. Optional courses - courses that students may choose to take if offered by a school. The taking of optional courses may be a requirement for students if they are to acquire 100 credits for diploma purposes.

3. Core content - that portion of a given course that all students taking that course must study and all teachers are required to teach. This part of certain courses forms the basis for provincial achievement and diploma examinations.

4. Elective content - that portion of a course's content over which the teacher and school may have some discretion.

   Note: In the vast majority of cases, provincial courses consist of both a core component and an elective component. Teachers are required to provide instruction in both.